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INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 013073

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [GE](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: GERMAN FM STEINMEIER'S MOSCOW VISIT: MIDDLE EAST,  
IRAN, AND RUSSIA-EU

CLASSIFIED BY: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES DANIEL A. RUSSELL.  
REASONS: 1.4(B/D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER FRANK-WALTER

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STEINMEIER MET WITH PRESIDENT PUTIN, FIRST DEPUTY PRIME  
MINISTER MEDVEDEV, AND FM LAVROV IN MOSCOW ON DECEMBER 21.  
ACCORDING TO A READOUT FROM GERMAN AMBASSADOR WALTER SCHMIDT,  
WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETINGS, PUTIN CLAIMED THAT RUSSIA'S  
DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT WITH SYRIA WAS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING  
DAMASCUS TO ACT RESPONSIBLY IN LEBANON, IRAQ AND THE BROADER  
MIDDLE EAST. AFTER MEETING PRESIDENT ASAD AND PM SINIORA,  
PUTIN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE LATTER WAS WILLING TO SEEK A  
COMPROMISE THAT WOULD INCLUDE THE OPPOSITION. TURNING TO  
IRAN, PUTIN SAID RUSSIA WOULD TRY TO JOIN CONSENSUS ON THE  
DRAFT UNSCR, BUT STEINMEIER WAS UNABLE TO PIN FM LAVROV DOWN  
IN A SEPARATE MEETING ON RUSSIA'S POSITION ON THE DRAFT TEXT.  
PUTIN COMPLAINED ABOUT THE BAD PRESS RUSSIA WAS GETTING IN  
THE WEST AND POLAND'S ATTEMPTS TO BLOCK NEGOTIATIONS ON A NEW  
RUSSIA-EU PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT (PCA).  
STEINMEIER INDICATED TO THE RUSSIANS THAT GERMANY WAS WILLING  
TO BE FLEXIBLE ON THE ENERGY PROVISIONS OF A NEW PCA. END  
SUMMARY.

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MIDDLE EAST

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12. (C) SCHMIDT SAID STEINMEIER MET WITH PUTIN FOR A ONE  
HOUR ONE-ON-ONE, AND THEN FOR ANOTHER HOUR IN AN EXPANDED  
FORMAT WITH LAVROV AND PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION FOREIGN  
POLICY ASSISTANT SERGEY PRIKHODKO. WHILE STEINMEIER WAS IN  
MOSCOW OSTENSIBLY TO PROVIDE A PREVIEW OF GERMANY'S G-8  
PRESIDENCY, SCHMIDT'S READOUT FOCUSED ON THE MIDDLE EAST,  
IRAN, AND RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS. PUTIN REVIEWED HIS RECENT  
MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AND PM SINIORA, NOTING THAT HE  
APPROACHED THESE MEETINGS WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF SKEPTICISM,  
BUT THAT RUSSIA WAS COMMITTED TO PREVENTING CIVIL WAR IN  
LEBANON, WHICH WOULD BE A DISASTER FOR THE REGION. IN  
RESPONSE TO STEINMEIER'S QUESTIONING ABOUT RUSSIA WEAPONS  
SALES TO SYRIA, PUTIN SAID THAT ASAD HAD REASSURED HIM THAT  
SYRIA HAD DONE NOTHING TO VIOLATE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH  
RUSSIA (E.G., END-USER AGREEMENTS RESTRICTING TRANSFERS TO  
THIRD PARTIES). ASAD ALSO TOLD PUTIN THAT SYRIA WAS ENGAGING  
WITH THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT TO TAKE MEASURES TO STABILIZE THE  
BORDER SITUATION. PUTIN STRESSED THAT RUSSIA WAS PRESSING

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SYRIA NOT ONLY TO ACT RESPONSIBLY IN IRAQ, BUT IN THE BROADER  
MIDDLE EAST. (SCHMIDT HAD FEW DETAILS TO REPORT ABOUT THE  
ONE-ON-ONE OTHER THAN TO NOTE THAT PUTIN AND STEINMEIER HAD A  
LONG DISCUSSION ABOUT THE BAKER-HAMILTON REPORT.)

13. (C) PUTIN TOLD STEINMEIER THAT HE BELIEVED THAT SINIORA  
WAS PREPARED TO FIND A POLITICAL COMPROMISE THAT WOULD  
INCLUDE OPPOSITION MEMBERS. THERE WAS NO TRUST BETWEEN  
SINIORA AND ASAD, PUTIN SAID, BUT HE WAS ENCOURAGED THAT  
SYRIA AND LEBANON WERE TALKING TO EACH OTHER AND HOPEFUL THAT  
A PEACEFUL, INCLUSIVE SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND. PUTIN  
STRESSED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "INCLUSIVENESS" THROUGHOUT HIS  
DISCUSSION OF THE MIDDLE EAST, ARGUING THAT HAMAS MUST BE  
INTEGRATED INTO ANY PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT AND MUST NOT BE  
FORCED BACK UNDERGROUND, AND THAT NO SOLUTION IN THE BROADER

MIDDLE EAST WAS TENABLE IF IT DID NOT INCLUDE IRAN.

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IRAN  
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14. (C) PUTIN STATED THAT RUSSIA WOULD TRY TO COME TO  
AGREEMENT ON THE DRAFT UNSCR BECAUSE OF MOSCOW'S INTEREST IN  
FINDING A JOINT POSITION TO RESPOND TO TEHRAN. IN A SEPARATE  
MEETING WITH LAVROV, THERE WAS AN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION OF THE  
UNSCR, BUT NO CLOSURE. SCHMIDT TOOK AWAY FROM THE MEETING  
THE IMPRESSION THAT LAVROV HAD NO AUTHORITY TO ENGAGE ON THE  
RESOLUTION AND THAT IT WAS THE SUBJECT OF WHAT SCHMIDT TERMED  
SIGNIFICANT INFIGHTING WITHIN THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT.  
ACCORDING TO LAVROV, EVEN THE POSSIBILITY OF A VETO COULD NOT  
BE EXCLUDED. (FRENCH AMBASSADOR DE LABOULAYE NOTED TO THE  
CHARGE THAT IN A SEPARATE DECEMBER 21 DISCUSSION, SECURITY  
COUNCIL SECRETARY IGOR IVANOV HAD BEEN SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE  
PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THE RESOLUTION. IVANOV CONCEDED THE  
IMPORTANCE OF PRESENTING A UNIFIED FRONT TO TEHRAN AND,  
SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THOUGHT RUSSIA'S CHOICE ON THE UNSCR WAS  
ABSTENTION OR A POSITIVE VOTE AND THAT AN ABSTENTION GAINED  
NOTHING FOR MOSCOW.)

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RUSSIA-EU  
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15. (C) FOCUSING ON RUSSIA'S IMAGE IN THE WEST, PUTIN  
LAMENTED TO STEINMEIER ABOUT THE NEGATIVE PRESS MOSCOW WAS  
GETTING AFTER THE POLITKOVSKAYA AND LITVINENKO MURDERS AND  
THE FALLOUT FROM SAKHALIN 2, BUT OBSERVED THAT IT WAS NOTHING  
NEW, NOTING WESTERN PRESS COVERAGE DURING THE SECOND CHECHEN

WAR. IN PUTIN'S VIEW, THERE WERE "FORCES" THAT DID NOT WANT  
TO SEE IMPROVEMENT IN RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH EUROPE. BOTH  
MURDERS HAD BEEN TRAGIC, BUT THEY NEEDED TO BE INVESTIGATED  
AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. PUTIN PRONOUNCED

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HIMSELF SATISFIED BY THE COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND  
BRITISH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES. STEINMEIER RESPONDED TO  
PUTIN'S COMPLAINTS BY STRESSING THAT THERE WERE EUROPEANS  
INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THE RUSSIA-EU RELATIONSHIP, BUT THAT  
RUSSIA NEEDED TO TAKE STEPS TO HELP CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN  
WHICH IMPROVED COOPERATION WAS POLITICALLY FEASIBLE.

16. (C) PUTIN CRITICIZED POLAND FOR BLOCKING NEGOTIATIONS  
OVER A SUCCESSOR PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT (PCA).  
HE CLAIMED RUSSIA WAS PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH POLAND TO  
RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF MEAT IMPORTS, BUT THAT WHILE WARSAW HAD  
MADE A PUBLIC FUSS OVER THE DISPUTE, IT HAD BEEN UNWILLING TO

SIT DOWN TO HAMMER OUT A SOLUTION. AS PUTIN NOTED CAUSTICALLY, THE POLES HAD TRIED TO PASS OFF CHINESE BUFFALO AS POLISH VEAL.

17. (C) PUTIN STRESSED TO STEINMEIER THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ADDRESS ENERGY ISSUES IN A NEW PCA IN A SATISFACTORY WAY. SCHMIDT NOTED GERMAN WILLINGNESS IN DEVELOPING ENERGY CHAPTERS OF THE PCA TO DROP PROVISIONS FROM

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THE ENERGY CHARTER TREATY REGARDING MAJORITY OWNERSHIP OF PIPELINES AND ENERGY FIELDS THAT RUSSIA OBJECTED TO IN ORDER TO COME TO CLOSURE. STEINMEIER ALSO MET SEPARATELY ONE-ON-ONE WITH FIRST DFM MEDVEDEV TO DISCUSS ENERGY ISSUES, BUT SCHMIDT DID NOT SHARE DETAILS. (STEINMEIER AND MEDVEDEV HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DATING FROM STEINMEIER'S PREVIOUS POSITION AS MEDVEDEV'S COUNTERPART.)

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CIVIL SOCIETY  
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18. (C) STEINMEIER ATTENDED TWO CIVIL SOCIETY EVENTS WHILE IN MOSCOW. THE FIRST, MORE POLITICALLY FOCUSED MEETING WAS TO INVOLVE GARRI KASPAROV (UNITED CIVIL FRONT), GRIGORIY YAVLINSKIY (YABLOKO), AND INDEPENDENT DUMA DEPUTY VLADIMIR RYZHKOV, BUT ONLY KASPAROV ATTENDED. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT SOME OF RUSSIA'S PROBLEMS COULD BE TRACED BACK TO DECISIONS TAKEN DURING YELTSIN'S TENURE, KASPAROV ARGUED THAT RUSSIANS WERE BECOMING IMPOVERISHED (!) AND TALKED UP HIS CHANCES OF WINNING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST (!!).

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MEMORIAL, TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL AND THE MOSCOW HELSINKI GROUP WERE AMONG THE ATTENDEES AT THE SECOND EVENT. NGO LEADERS COMPLAINED ABOUT THEIR STATUS IN RUSSIA, BUT URGED THAT THE WEST REMAIN ENGAGED. IN RESPONSE TO STEINMEIER'S QUESTION ABOUT THE "OTHER RUSSIA" MOVEMENT, MOST CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS WERE CRITICAL OF ITS APPROACH AND IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY OPERATED.  
RUSSELL